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Preface

ROOTS 9 was first published early in 2006, and introduced a community-based methodology known as Participatory Assessment of Disaster Risk. It appeared approximately one year after the launch of the Hyogo Framework for Action (UNISDR, January 2005) and was intended to make a small contribution towards the outworking of that framework at community level.

This revised edition, with substantial reworking of the original material, is considered necessary for a number of reasons.

First, the methodology has been tried in approximately 20 countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. The approach has been largely successful, but lessons have been learned, both in the way the methodology has been taught and in the process of implementation at community level. This revised edition aims to build on this learning and offers a more effective tool, with practical guidance, templates and question sets.

Second, the progression of climate change is having a significant impact on disaster types, frequency and intensity around the world, affecting particularly those people least able to cope with increased frequency and intensity of extreme climatic events. While recognised in the earlier edition, the speed and projected impacts of climate change were underestimated. As the science has developed, so has the need for a risk assessment methodology which takes account of projected future risks as well as the known hazards of the past.

Third, the range of tools available in the fields of disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and environmental sustainability has increased considerably in recent years, with contributions from Tearfund and other sources. These tools are acknowledged and cross-referenced where applicable. There is still a clear need for PADR, but sometimes it will be best used in combination with a specific tool for climate change adaptation or environmental sustainability to achieve greatest impact.

Finally, the concept of community resilience has gained much support. This is a more positive way of defining the particular characteristics which give a community the ability to prepare for, cope with and recover from shocks of whatever origin.

Several cross-cutting issues are integrated into this publication, including:

GENDER Recognising the different impacts of hazards on men and women and the capacities that both women and men are able to contribute to risk reduction

CHILD SENSITIVITY Recognising that children are among the most vulnerable

HIV Recognising that HIV increases the vulnerability of those living with it and undermines coping mechanisms

CONFLICT Recognising that conflict affects a community's ability to withstand and recover from natural disaster

It is the author's hope that this publication will advance the cause of disaster risk reduction and contribute to the building of safer, more resilient communities.

Introduction

Disasters – the reality

Over the last ten years, approximately 240 million people each year were affected by so-called natural disasters. These disasters cause immeasurable damage to life, property and livelihoods, sometimes in the space of a few minutes, but more often over weeks or months. The slow but relentless impact of climate change is affecting us now and will be felt as a disaster for many years to come. Those living in the poorest countries and communities undoubtedly suffer the most, and are least able to cope and recover from the losses. In most cases, women suffer more than men and make greater sacrifices for the survival of their families.

There is evidence that the number, severity and economic impact of some types of disaster – particularly floods and storms – is increasing.¹ Climate change is advancing more rapidly than most scientific projections ten years ago indicated, and extreme weather events will contribute increasingly to climate-related disasters. Areas previously less affected by natural hazards may find that floods or droughts become part of daily life.

Disasters often reverse development progress. Many predict that the Millennium Development Goals for 2015 will not be met, because disasters are eroding the advances made in several sectors.² It is also true that bad development, eg housing construction in known flood plain areas, can contribute to new disasters.

Justification for risk reduction

Disaster management in the past often consisted of a set of reactive measures to save lives and assist victims in their recovery. In the last two decades, politicians and aid practitioners have accepted that many disasters can in fact be avoided, or at least made less destructive, if the risks faced by vulnerable communities are reduced.

'We cannot stop natural hazards, but we can and must make people and their livelihoods less vulnerable to them.'

Bill Clinton, former US President

The Hyogo Framework for Action (2005–2015), launched in January 2005, set out five areas of action required to reduce disaster risk (Section 2.5).

While some progress has been made, political will to implement the framework is often lacking. However, at community level there is increasing evidence that disaster impact can be significantly reduced if the five pillars of the framework are taken seriously.³ There is also economic evidence that relatively small amounts of money spent on risk-reducing measures may save much larger sums later on, in terms of spending on humanitarian aid and reconstruction after a disaster.⁴

1 EM-DAT (2009) *Natural disaster trends*

2 UNDP (2004) *Reducing disaster risk: a challenge to development*

3 UNISDR (2007) *Building Disaster Resilient Communities*

4 Cabot Venton C, Siedenburg J (2010) *Investing in communities*

Purpose and use of the PADR methodology

Much of this book is devoted to explaining the conceptual basis and practical outworking of a tool known as **Participatory Assessment of Disaster Risk** (PADR).

The purpose of the tool is to enable a community to assess the factors that contribute to the size and scale of any potential disaster and to develop a locally owned plan to address those factors and reduce the risk of disaster. It is essentially a community-empowering process, helping people to understand cause-effect relationships and to realise their own capacities to reduce risks. It also enables them to identify and challenge the social, political and economic structures which contribute to their vulnerability. Such activities may be set within existing development projects.

Intended users of PADR

PADR will particularly interest those engaged in humanitarian or development work in locations which experience frequent weather-related hazards, such as floods, cyclones or drought. It will also be valuable to those working in regions affected by long-term food insecurity, as a way of exploring the deeper causes, which are more complex than simply lack of rain. It can also be used by relief workers in the weeks following a disaster, to identify risks and avoid rebuilding the vulnerabilities which contributed to the disaster.

This publication is aimed at middle-level managers and field supervisors. Most PADR users will be NGOs, or the relief and development departments of church denominations. With the latter, the methodology could easily be used with members of individual churches, who would subsequently develop and implement a risk reduction plan for themselves and their wider community. Other faith-based groups could also use the process.

Development workers may find PADR helpful when designing interventions in disaster-prone areas. The methodology could help managers to design projects in such a way as to minimise the impact of hazards. PADR is one of a number of tools available to development and humanitarian workers. Those concerned with disaster risk assessment were collected by the ProVention Consortium, and can be found on the website www.preventionweb.net

Risk reduction, climate change and environmental degradation

Most disasters are climate-related. It follows, therefore, that more extreme weather-related events as a result of climate change will mean more disasters, and a greater need for effective **disaster risk reduction** (DRR).

Section 2.7 considers the relationship between DRR and **climate change adaptation** (CCA) in more detail. DRR addresses rapid-onset and slow-onset disasters (although more frequently it focuses on sudden shocks), while CCA focuses on gradual, progressive change. Environmental degradation is also happening. Adaptation to changes caused by environmental degradation, termed **environmental degradation adaptation** (EDA), is also required. It is not always helpful or necessary to make distinctions between shocks caused by climate change, environmental degradation or some form of natural hazard. For future survival, communities will have to adapt to all three. PADR will also help practitioners in CCA and those working on environmental issues to explore the changing risk factors at community level.